

Quality veterinary care  
as individual as your pet

## **Vaccinating your pet**

In the days that I was a veterinary nurse, in the 1980's, it was advised we vaccinate our pets every year for all the diseases they were likely to come across. The technology to tell us otherwise did not really exist and if it did it was either in America or not as accurate as we would like it to be. Many scientists and vets were keen to work on this subject and even then work was being carried out in this field.

The immune system of humans and animals is very sensitive and a highly tuned system. It has to detect foreign or non-self materials in order to produce a reaction against it to protect the body. At the same time, and equally as important as this system, is the ability to recognise its 'self' material and not mount a reaction against it!

## **What is a Vaccine?**

Vaccines contain very, very, very small microscopic particles from viruses such as distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis and parvovirus that have been altered to prevent the disease themselves occurring. Despite these alterations, the body is still able to recognise the disease and mount an 'army' to put into reserve for future attacks.

## **What happens when a vaccine is given to our pets?**

When your vet injects a vaccination into your pet – several things happen! Lots of different cells in your pets body are stimulated and your pets body recognises the injected material as 'foreign' and mounts a reaction against it.

## **Does your pet have his/her own immunity?**

Animals do get a certain amount of immunity passed to them by their mothers – just like us! In animals this usually drops off around 6-10 weeks of age leaving the immunity level very low. Vets wait to start the puppy or kitten vaccines until this natural immunity has dropped, but if left too long young pets are left with very little immunity and are vulnerable to disease.



Adult pets who have already been exposed to these diseases have already built up a certain level of immunity to them due to the immune system having a kind of 'memory' system.

### **So why do we vaccinate yearly?**

It's not so that vets and drug companies can make money as many believe – we vaccinate every year because you cannot tell by looking at an animal whether they have a good level of immunity or not. You can certainly look at a poorly, underweight animal and guess that its immunity is probably not great but looking at outwardly healthy animals is not so easy to tell. Until recently there has been no affordable or reliable tests (in my opinion) readily available to help us look at the immune status of our pets. There are cheap and 'nasty' tests available online that are usually inaccurate and can give a false impression about your pet's immunity. I am not saying that every test is rubbish but research and shopping around is important. I have spoken to many laboratories who are now offering titre testing, and here at Rock View we are pleased to now offer this service.

### **Do you have to be a client?**

No! I am happy to open this service up to all of the doggie community.

### **How much does it cost?**

The whole procedure which consists of a small blood sample, the test and a printout of the results costs only £45.

### **Will it hurt your pet to have the test done?**

The test is a small blood test which involves a small needle. If you would rather not be present whilst the blood sample is being taken, you can take a seat in another room – and have a cup of tea! The nurse will clip a small amount of fur from your pet and the blood will be taken from the neck, under the chin or from the front leg. If you have a preference, or if your pet has had a previous illness or complaint which means that one area may be less comfortable than the other – let us know. At Rock View, we always try to avoid the 'one size fits all' situation, we believe that your pets are family and each has his/her own individual needs.

### **When will you receive the results?**

The blood sample will be sent to the experts at a specialist lab where they examine and analyse the sample thoroughly. We typically get the results

back within 7-10 days. As soon as we receive your pets results, we will then contact you to let you know the outcome and go through the results thoroughly with you. You will also receive a detailed report of your pets results.

### **If your pets results show good immunity, will you need to vaccinate ever again?**

There is not a titre test for leptospirosis and there are well documented cases of lepto in Cornwall as it is found in water, cattle urine and in agricultural land. We do advise that you vaccinate your dogs against lepto every year. The titre test is only a snapshot of your pets immune system on the day that the blood is taken. We assume that the immune system doesnt change, but of course – it can! If your pet develops an immune mediated disease or gets lost and doesnt eat for a week or more then the stress can seriously affect the immune system.

### **How often should you Titre test?**

We advise Titre testing every 12 months, providing your pet is otherwise well. Our vet will advise you on whether you should retest once your pets titre test results are back.

### **What happens if your pets immunity is low?**

Our vet will advise you on the next step but it is likely that we will advise a full vaccination course.

### **Will kennels take a titre tested pet?**

This is the decision of the individual kennels but most accept the report that you receive. There IS NOT a titre test for kennel cough which is an illness transmitted by dogs coming into contact with each other – not only in kennels but in their day to day lives.

### **How do you book the titre test?**

The procedure is carried out by one of our trained nurses – providing your pet has seen a vet within the last 12months. If not, then an initial vet check is necessary. Simply call 01726 890887 to book in.